

February 16, 2017

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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Brain Injury Alliance of CT

Good Evening Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee.

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. In his proposal, the Governor seeks to reduce funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line item, which includes the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, by 20%.

I have worked for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut for the past year, and previously worked for the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey for 17 years. The effect of brain injury on individuals and their families can be devastating, and has an impact on how they function every day. I have seen parents, spouses, children and siblings become caregivers in an instant, struggling to balance work with caregiving, along with the never ending task of becoming their family member's own personal advocate and case manager rolled into one. It can be an exhausting task – often with very little support and nowhere to turn.

The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut provides an invaluable service to people with brain injury and their loved ones, as well as those professionals assisting them. Brain injury drastically impacts the life of the individual, as well as their loved ones – often leaving individuals feeling isolated and lost. BIAC assists these individuals by helping them to navigate what is a very complicated continuum of care that is often fragmented and confusing. Whether the injury was recent or years ago, it can be extremely difficult to find services and providers, as well as basic information about brain injury. BIAC is available for all of these individuals, providing assistance in navigating life after brain injury.

In addition,

- For 35 years, BIAC has received an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide **entirely free** resources and supports which the State is unable to provide.
- The Department of Social Services contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. In the amendments to both Waivers was implemented last year, BIAC is the only organization approved to provide advanced training for case managers.
- **No one else does what BIAC does, including the Department of Social Services (DSS)**, which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that it is not equipped to offer. BIAC meets the needs of the State's brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively.

- If BIAC is no longer able to provide these services, DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS. BIAC's services only cost the state \$104,228 last year.

A 20% reduction in funding would severely impact BIAC and the services they provide to the community. Please maintain funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line so that BIAC can be there for those who need them most.

Thank you

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